



## Search ends for iwi on rail line

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By Marcel Honoré

Honolulu rail officials say they've completed the fieldwork on the transit project's archaeological survey, bringing them a step closer to restarting construction after a lawsuit stalled that work last year.

Since 2009, surveyors have dug more than 400 trenches along the rail line's 20-mile route — from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center — to check for Native Hawaiian burials or other archaeological resources in the path of the rail line. Some 260 of those trenches were dug between Middle Street and Ala Moana Center, where officials believed remains and artifacts were most likely to be discovered.

During the work, they reported seven findings involving human remains, including two that were deemed full burials. One was at Halekauwila and Keawe streets, and the other at Punchbowl Street near Pohukaina Street.

The most recent burial finding was on Jan. 27 during the final weekend of digging, when surveyors uncovered a section of human pelvic bone. The fragment was found among fill material, so it's unlikely it was buried there originally, officials with the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation said.

"We now know what we're dealing with and we will be able to make any necessary design changes well in advance of construction in the urban Honolulu area," HART Executive Director and CEO Dan Grabauskas said in a statement Wednesday.



Dan  
Grabauskas:  
*HART's CEO will make  
necessary changes in  
respect of burial sites*

"Assuming that we leave all these in place as burials and treat them that way," there would be no impact on the rail route or cost, Grabauskas added Thursday at a joint meeting of HART's Finance and Project Oversight committees.

The authority, which oversees the \$5.26 billion project, must now complete a report of at least 2,000 pages on its archaeological inventory survey, Grabauskas said. It's up to the State Historic Preservation Division, which has been overseeing HART's survey, to approve the report — a move that would allow the transit project to go forward.

"It's going to take a few months," HART spokeswoman Jeanne Mariani-Belding said Wednesday. SHPD officials did not respond to a request for comment.

HART had started construction on the transit project in its West Oahu sections, where surveying had been completed. However, Native Hawaiian Legal Corp. sued the city in 2011 and challenged its decision to conduct the survey in phases.

Last August the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled that the entire archaeological inventory survey had to be done before building could proceed. The ruling suspended construction, and HART officials estimated last fall that the delays would cost \$7 million to \$10 million per month.

On Thursday, construction officials reported that for September through December, costs came in 27 percent lower than HART had anticipated — a difference of \$4.2 million.

HART expects to resume construction on the rail project in September.

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*Star-Advertiser reporter Gordon Pang contributed to this report.*